GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4954
ANSWERED ON:27.04.2005
INDIAN PARTICIPATION IN ARAB LEAGUE SUMMIT
Owaisi Shri Asaduddin

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether an Indian Delegation participated in the recently held Arab League Summit for the first time;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether India and the League signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2002 for cooperation and structured consultations;

(d) if so, the progress made since the MOU was signed; and

(e) the further steps taken or suggested in the Summit for increasing cooperation and business between the two?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS(SHRI E. AHAMED)

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) At the invitation of the Government of Algeria, a 5-member Indian delegation led by the Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri E. Ahamed and including the Special Envoy on West Asia and MEPP Ambassador C.R. Gharekhan participated in the Arab League Summit as an Observer. The Summit was held on 22-23 March, 2005 in Algiers.

(c) Yes, Sir. An MoU between India and League of Arab States was signed on 6th March, 2002 in Cairo.

(d) Since the signing of MoU, regular consultations have been held with the League of Arab States in May, 2003 and June, 2004 on issues of mutual concern and interest.

(e) India`s first ever participation at the Summit was greatly appreciated by the host country and other Arab League member-countries. The Saudi Foreign Minister called India`s participation `historic`. MOS (EA) used his presence at the Summit to call on/interact with Heads of Delegations of a large number of Arab League member-countries (Foreign Ministers of Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Palestine, etc.) and other dignitaries including Secretary General Arab League Amre Moussa, UNSG Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi etc. He also had interactions with leaders of observer delegations and with Algerian dignitaries, including a number of Algerian Ministers, on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues. He further had interactions and informal meetings with several Heads of Arab League Governments including President of Palestine Authority, Prime Minister of Kuwait, Heads of States of Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Foreign Ministers of Yemen, UAE, Morocco etc. on the sidelines of the Conference. He also presented a special message from Prime Minister to the President of Algeria and had a separate discussion with him.

Both in his meetings with leaders of Arab League member-countries as also in the statement made by him at the opening plenary, MOS (EA) emphasized the importance which was being attached by the Government in India to further strengthening the fraternal bonds with Arab countries as enshrined in the National Common Minimum Programme of the Government in India. MOS (EA) highlighted the great complementarity existing between the economies of India and the Arab World. India`s economic reforms and vast markets offered fresh openings for mutually beneficial ventures. He expressed India`s readiness to enhance cooperation by sharing with the Arab countries its experience and expertise in institution and capacity building, governance, science and technology including information technology and bio-technology, health care and higher education and underlined the appointment of the Special Envoy for West Asia and the MEPP by the Government. GOI had appointed a Special to West Asia and Middle East Peace Process to underline the Government`s policy.